THE MIZAN NEWSLETTER

No. 7 July 1959

The Mizan Newsletter aims at giving an objective and balanced account of current Soviet writings on the Middle East

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SOVIET REAPPRAISAL OF EASTERN IDEOLOGIES AND RELIGIONS

The need for a reappraisal The 50th anniversary of Lenin's major work on philosophy, MATERIALISM AND EMPIRIO-CRITICISM*, has been brought to the notice of Soviet orientalists, and also of the wider Soviet public interested in eastern affairs, by articles in PROBLEMY VOSTOKOVEDENIYA No. 2 and SOVREMENNYY VOSTOK No. 5 of 1959. Lenin's "great work of creative Marxism", says A.D. Litman in SOVREMENNYY VOSTOK, dealt a shattering blow to bourgeois idealist philosophy when it appeared, and today is a powerful weapon against bourgeois ideologies and against revisionist falsifications of Marxism; it "inspires the advanced scholars of the whole world to struggle for materialism, democracy and peace and against idealism and reaction". For Soviet orientalists and philosophers studying the ideologies of the east, says Litman, Lenin's work is of "guiding significance"; there has been "a certain lagging behind" in this field, which a closer attention to "Lenin's great ideas" will help to overcome.

Soviet scholars, Litman recalls, have produced valuable studies on the development of "progressive philosophical and social-political ideas"

* In THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF COMMUNISM, 1951, p. 168, R.N. Carew Hunt says of Lenin's MATERIALISM AND EMPIRIO-CRITICISM: "This work was his (Lenin's) major contribution to Marxist philosophy in his lifetime... After the October Revolution it became, however, the standard of intellectual orthodoxy, any departure from which could be represented as being as much an act of treachery to the revolutionary movement as were divergences on questions of Party strategy and tactics."

among the peoples of Central Asia and Transcaucasia - although, he remarks, the link between the latter and the philosophical thought of Persia, the Arab countries, India and China has not been clearly enough brought out in one important recent work; and the history of ideologies of the non-Soviet east has been studied by such renowned Soviet orientalists as Academicians F.I. Shcherbatskiy, S.F. Ol'denburg and B.Ya. Vladimirtsov and - in the field of Arab social thought - I. Yu. Krachkovskiy. Nevertheless, says Litman, in the light of "the historical processes which are taking place in countries of the east" Soviet study of "problems connected with the ideologies of peoples of the east" is still seriously inadequate - for example, study of the "powerful philosophical traditions" which, as in India, have influenced national movements for liberation from imperialism, or, as in China, are the centuries-old cultural and historical heritage of a great people. Also serious, Litman declares, is "the absence of works drawing general conclusions on the history of the ideologies of the Middle East".

"Peculiarities" requiring study It may be asked whether there are special reasons for a Soviet reappraisal of eastern ideologies at this particular juncture. (Litman makes it clear that in the term "ideologies" he includes social thought, philosophical traditions and religions as well as political ideologies.) Litman's own account of the reasons is as follows:

> "The very process of the crisis and breaking up of the colonial system of imperialism, the powerful growth in the national liberation struggle of the peoples of Asia and Africa, the considerable successes achieved by the peoples of the east who have entered on the path of independent political and economic development, the magnificent achievements of the Asiatic countries of people's democracy in all fields of life - all this renders a many-sided and profound study of the ideologies of the peoples of the east and the ideology of their national liberation struggle vitally necessary...The historical processes which are taking place in countries of the east make it imperatively necessary to produce works which draw general conclusions and which with thoroughness and profundity analyse and disclose the general laws and specific peculiarities in the formation of ideologies of peoples of the east in connection with concrete experience of their social-economic and political development."

The above suggests that recent developments make it necessary for Soviet scholars to examine "specific peculiarities" of eastern ideologies which have hitherto escaped their analysis, and to fit them into a coherent pattern which will accord with Leninist principles. The Middle East is evidently to be included:

"The development and successes of the national liberation movement in Arab countries and the growth of national consciousness of the Arab peoples raises particularly acutely the problem of preparing monograph works devoted to the study and interpretation of the centuries-old history of their philosophical and social-political thought. The absence of works drawing general conclusions on the history of the ideologies of the Middle East peoples is a substantial gap."

In the eastern countries themselves, Litman points out, scholars are doing fundamental research into the history of their social and philosophical thought - in India, Persia, the Arab countries and above all in China, where the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of China has drawn up a 12-year plan for such studies.

Eastern religions and eastern materialism Litman points out that "in the development of ideological trends in countries of the east religion has played, and in a number of cases plays at the present time, a far from minor role". He goes on to speak of Gandhism in India, as an example of a national liberation movement based on religious dogmas; he contrasts this with the "extremely reactionary doctrines" propagated by the Kuomintang in the name of Confucianism. At the same time, he asserts that eastern peoples have their own "materialist traditions"; and, in the light of this, he denounces "reactionary statements of bourgeois ideologists on the so-called 'contemplative-mystical' turn of mind of eastern thinkers and the 'inferiority' of the philosophical teachings of the East".

Indian philosophical and social thought, says Litman, is "not only not inferior in its historical significance to the philosophical thought of the West, but in a number of questions is ahead of it"; the Indian philosopher M. Hiriyanna has "shown the existence of a solid materialist, atheistic stream in the development of Indian social thought". In the Middle East too "advanced scholars" have done valuable work in this field:

"The Persian scholar Zabihollah Safa on the basis of a profound study of primary sources and extensive factual material gives a detailed account of the development of sciences and philosophy in the Near and in part of the Middle East. (A footnote here mentions Zabihollah Safa's HISTORY OF RATIONAL SCIENCES IN THE HISTORY OF ISLAM UP TO THE FIFTH CENTURY A.H., Tehran, 1913 - in Persian.) The Arab researcher Yuhana Qumayr in his book THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ARABS, published in 1947 in Beirut, shows the enormous fruitful development of philosophical thought among Arab peoples."

Soviet orientalists and philosophers, Litman says, must "produce fundamental Marxist works giving...a profound analysis of materialist

philosophical doctrines in the East". He goes on to explain how Lenin saw the history of philosophical thought in terms of a constant struggle between idealism and materialism - in Lenin's words, "a struggle which, in the last analysis, expresses the tendencies and ideology of hostile classes in contemporary society". This doctrine of the class origin of ideological trends, says Litman, is basic for the study of eastern ideologies and the "complex, contradictory and specifically original processes" in their development, each of which must be seen in its proper historical perspective:

> "Only a profound analysis of philosophical and social-political ideas in relation to the concrete arrangement of class forces, taking into consideration the peculiarities of the social practices of the time, makes possible an intelligible explanation of their real role in the historical development of a given people."

The Soviet view of Islam Articles on the MATERIALISM AND EMPIRIO-CRITICISM anniversary have appeared widely in Soviet philosophical and Party journals; and it might therefore be thought that the PROBLEMY VOSTOKOVEDENIYA article merely represents a Soviet orientalist's tribute to the anniversary and to Leninist orthodoxy. However, the purposeful tone of the article and its authoritative references to "lagging behind" and shortcomings in Soviet studies suggest that a programme of analysis and reassessment of eastern ideologies is in fact envisaged, which, among other things, will entail a closer examination of the ideologies of Middle East nationalist movements and also of Middle East philosophical and religious traditions - that is, principally, Islam.

The Soviet view of Islam is stated as follows in the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, Vol. 18, 1953:

> "Islam, like other religions, has always played a reactionary role, representing in the hands of the exploiting classes an instrument of spiritual oppression of the workers, and it was used by the foreign colonisers for the enslavement of the peoples of the East."

However, speaking of the sects of Islam, the article says that these were in some cases "an expression of powerless protest of the working masses against class oppression and feudal oppression". Ye.A. Belyayev, in MUSLIM SECTARIANISM, 1957, says that popular movements which appeared in the guise of Islamic sects could not in the nature of things be successful:

> "The religious form of these movements must be recognized as one of the basic reasons for the final failure of the sectarian

movements, the rank-and-file participants in which attempted to establish a kingdom of truth and justice on the earth; no religion can serve as a means of liberating the people from oppression and exploitation."

Nevertheless, in the Soviet view, religion can be the vehicle of progressive change: in its article on "religion" the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (Vol. 36, 1955) says:

"In the history of society the replacement of certain religious beliefs by others may, in determined conditions of social structure, be connected with progressive manifestations in the life of peoples, as for example early Christianity, the conversion of Russia, etc.; but this does not alter either the reasons for the emergence of religious ideas or their essence."

This duality in the Soviet academic approach to religion is the counterpart of the dual attitude adopted in the matter of anti-religious propaganda - the attitude defined, for instance, in a Party Central Committee statement published in PRAVDA of 11th November 1954, which declared that the Soviet Communist Party "considers it necessary to conduct a profound systematic scientific-atheist propaganda, at the same time, however, not allowing the religious feelings of believers and also of devotees of a cult to be offended".

In his PROBLEMY VOSTOKOVEDENIYA article Litman, like other Soviet writers, is not unapproving in his references to political aspects of certain religious movements; but, unlike other Soviet writers, he does not accompany these references with the traditional Soviet condemnation of religion as such. Instead, he suggests that the natural corrective for eastern religious idealism is to be found in the East itself, in traditions of eastern materialism which it is now the duty of Soviet scholars to disclose and expound. This study of eastern materialism apparently represents a new initiative for Soviet scholars; it would not be surprising if it were accompanied by a new approach to eastern religions themselves.

RECENT SOVIET WRITING ON IRAQ

Iraq "not socialist" On 18th March, in his address to the Iraqi economic delegation visiting Moscow, Khrushchev gave the Soviet view of developments in Iraq in the following words (MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 4, appendix p. 5):

"Certainly what is taking place in Iraq is in no way socialism. But then we never conducted our relations with Arab countries on

this basis. However, we consider that progressive reforms are being carried out in the Iraqi Republic and a more advanced system is being established than in neighbouring countries of the Arab East. It is natural that our sympathies should be on the side of those Governments and those states which take into consideration the interests of their people... We regard the activities of the Iraqi Government, directed to raising the national economy of the country and the prosperity of its people, with great attention and sincere sympathy."

In saying that Iraq was far from socialism, at least in the Soviet sense, Khrushchev evidently implied no criticism but was stating a fact acknowledged by Iraqis themselves; for, in an article on Iraq's economic policy in IZVESTIYA of 22nd May, the former Iraqi Minister of Economy Dr. Ibrahim Kubbah said:

"The revolution of 14th July is considered a revolution with the participation of all strata of the population of Iraq, including also the middle class, the industrialists and merchants, who together with the working classes direct their efforts to the fulfilment of the above basic tasks (the creation of a flourishing economy free from imperialist and feudal influence).... Industrialization will be carried through by the Government in cooperation with private capital and with the industrial middle class. The sphere of activity of this national group will be broadened. It will be given the opportunity of active participation in the financing of projects in light industry and in the framework of the general programme drawn up by the Government for rapid economic development in the coming years."

Agrarian reform In IZVESTIYA of 14th June the newspaper's Baghdad correspondent Kondrashov drew a picture of destitution and misery among peasants on the domain of a large landowner in southern Iraq, and said: "The condition of the poorest peasantry explains why agrarian reform is considered the basic problem for the revolution of 14th July." Like other Soviet writers on the subject, Kondrashov pointed out that the distribution of land in Iraq was not yet properly begun, and that even after the implementation of the reform 450,000 families - more than half the present number - would remain without land. Similarly PRAVDA's Baghdad correspondent Demchenko on 10th April said that in a number of districts no start had yet been made with agrarian reform; the authorities "consider that in present conditions, when the peasants in these regions do not have the money necessary to buy new implements, and the construction of irrigation systems has not been completed, the cultivators cannot cope with new lands." The reform does not entirely liquidate feudal ownership, says Demchenko, but it undermines the economic power of the landowners and the tribal shaykhs. In an article on Iraqi agrarian reform in

SOVREMENNYY VOSTOK No. 2 of 1959 Demchenko discusses the matter in greater detail:

> "Our table (a table giving relative figures of numbers of landowners and size of holdings) does not answer the question, how many feudalists will be deprived of their land. In any case it is clear that the number will not exceed 3,500. But another question arises: whether there are in Iraq sufficient suitable lands to provide for all peasants in accordance with the norms set down in the law, all the more since the landowners are left with comparatively large holdings and they maintain their previous strong positions in the agricultural economy. The writer put this question, in particular, to Abd ar-Razzaq az-Zubayri, the general director of the committee for agrarian reform. He said that the committee did not yet have detailed information, but, in his personal opinion, misgivings of this kind were justified in relation to areas of artificial irrigation."

Nevertheless, all Soviet writers agree that the agrarian reform law is a step in the right direction and that the Iraqi peasants are determined to see it put into effect. Demchenko declares: "The democratic forces of Iraq are unanimous that the agrarian reform must be implemented scrupulously and resolutely." Kondrashov says that the Iraqi peasant "is an active supporter of the Republic in so far as he realizes that, in defending it, he is defending his right to land and to a better life"; but, on the other side, "the successes and strength of the Republic depend on how it is able to satisfy the Iraqi peasant".

The political activity of Iraqi peasants, in the peasants' societies, has been noted with approval by Soviet writers. In IZVESTIYA on 17th April Kondrashov said that the Iraqi Government had not given its official permission for the formation of the peasants' societies, but it was not preventing their activity. (The law setting up peasants' societies was promulgated on 11th May - Ed.) Demchenko in PRAVDA on 10th April spoke of the "very great activity" of the peasants' societies in southern Iraq, resolved to assist the implementation of agrarian reform.

Economic aims Despite the scale of Soviet participation in Iraq's industrialization (see MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 5, pp. 12-13), Iraq's industrialization programme has not been widely discussed in Soviet publications, in which its main exponents have been Iraqis, notably the former Iraqi Minister of Economy Ibrahim Kubbah. The latter, in IZVESTIYA of 22nd May (see above), said that industrialization would free Iraq from its present condition of economic "dependence", and would "make us masters of our own fate and give us freedom to work out an economic policy which will conform to the people's interests". In UCHITEL'SKAYA GAZETA of 5th March

Kubbah was quoted as saying that "one of our basic principles is comprised in the fact that politics and economics are inseparable", and that industrialization was necessary in order to raise the people's living standard and to curtail the dominance of foreign capital. In INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS No. 4 of 1959 the Iraqi lawyer Aziz Sharif said that "when Iraq was under British domination" the "British colonialists" had "hindered the country's industrialization and rejected all economic projects"; Lord Salter, whom the Iraqi Government had called in to work out an economic development plan, had "frankly said on one occasion that Iraq should not develop an industry of her own (and) should remain a primary products country".

Kubbah's statement on the scope to be given to private capital investment in industry has been quoted above (see first paragraph). G. Mirskiy, in NEW TIMES No. 8 of 1959, says that the Iraqi Government "regards private initiative as the basis of the country's economic development", but will also invest heavily itself since private capital alone is not sufficient. In his IZVESTIYA article Kubbah says that "in the near future the Republic will not need foreign capital", especially not under such conditions as those required by the USA; but at the same time "agreements on loans from friendly countries will help us to provide our undertakings with the necessary technical equipment"; such loans "accord better with the interests of the Iraqi economy than the capital of private persons or of grasping international companies".

On Iraq's foreign trade, Mirskiy remarks that its previous "extremely one-sided orientation" has been corrected by agreements with new trade partners such as the Soviet Union. But, he says, this does not mean that Iraq intends to curtail her trade with the West:

> "The biggest consumers of her oil are France and Italy, and 60 per cent of her other exports goes to the Western countries. Iraq is interested in cooperating with the Western countries, the United States and Britain included. But she is justified in demanding equal cooperation based on mutual respect of interests and non-interference in each other's affairs."
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> (For Soviet views on the future of the Iraqi oil industry, see MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 6, pp. 8-10.)

Political developments The great virtue of the present regime in Iraq, according to Soviet writers, is the freedom it allows to mass organizations and expressions of mass opinion. In IZVESTIYA of 17th April Kondrashov wrote:

> "Where the favourable changes in the political atmosphere of the country reveal themselves is in the fact that the people, in their various classes, now have the opportunity of organizing

themselves, of showing social initiative, of expressing their opinion and putting forward their demands. The Government not only hears the voice of the people but obeys it."

The "freeze" of party activity in Iraq has been noted in Soviet accounts, but has not (to the date of writing) been the subject of comment. The view has been taken that the people's voice nevertheless finds adequate expression. According to Mirskiy, in NEW TIMES No. 8 of 1959, "although the ban on political parties has not yet been lifted, various public groups are in one way or another voicing their view on the problems facing the young Republic". Mirskiy and others note the "exceptionally high political activity of the masses", and the freedom accorded to such bodies as the peace defenders' organizations, youth and women's organizations, professional and trade unions, etc. The mutual support of the Government and the trade unions was noted by Nihad Kirdar, member of the Iraqi Council of Oil Workers, in an interview published in NEW TIMES No. 19 of 1959. He contrasted the attitude of Arif, who "used every trick to withhold permits authorizing unions", with that of Qasim: "I would like to emphasise that all the unions without exception support Gen. Qasim's Government, although their leaders do not all hold the same political views."

Salam Adil of the Iraqi Communist Party, in his speech at the XXIst CPSU Congress in Moscow on 2nd February 1959 (MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 2, Appendix A, p. 6) called for freedom of political activity for all the five parties then in the National Union Front. This appeal, on behalf of the coalition of the Communist Party with the other "patriotic parties", received no further notice in Soviet publications either at the time or later, although the National Union Front itself and its joint programme received favourable notice.

PRAVDA of 2nd July reported that the Baghdad press had given the news of the formation of a United National Front (or, National United Front) consisting of three parties: the Communist Party; the portion of the National Democratic Party which had repudiated the leadership's decision on the "freezing" of the party's activity; and the United Kurdish Democratic Party; together with a number of mass organizations - the peasants' societies, democratic youth and students' organizations, and the trade unions. On 8th July IZVESTIYA reported briefly Qasim's press conference of 5th July, noting that he had expressed himself against the formation of a United National Front during the present transitional period, but had said that it could be formed after the transitional period was over.

SOVIET ANGLE ON THE NEWS

Below are reviewed Soviet newspaper reports on Middle East events published during the period 24th June - 9th July.

Soviet-Iraqi relations TRUD of 8th July reported that a Soviet trade union delegation headed by M.M. Musakhanov, Secretary of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, had arrived in Baghdad to take part in the constituent congress of Iraqi trade unions.

Soviet newspapers published accounts of the official opening of the Iraqi-Soviet Friendship Society in Baghdad on 3rd July. TRUD said that the Union of Soviet Friendship Societies had presented the society with a library of 500 books, two sets of cinema equipment and recordings of Russian music.

For Soviet reports on the formation by the Communists of a National United Front in Iraq, and Qasim's attitude to it, see above article "Recent Soviet Writing on Iraq".

Soviet newspapers published under large headlines reports on Iraq's action in leaving the sterling area (TRUD 26th June), and on the Iraqi Ministry of Economy announcement on the suspension of activities of the Khaniqin Oil Company (IZVESTIYA 3rd July, under the heading "Iraq curtails the activity of foreign companies").

Soviet-UAR relations PRAVDA of 1st July said that it had been officially announced in Cairo that President Abd an-Nasir had "confirmed" the project for the High Dam worked out by Soviet experts and approved by Soviet experts; he had expressed warm appreciation of it. On 3rd July PRAVDA published an account of the press conference given by the Egyptian Minister of Public Works Musa Arafah, in which he set forth the advantages of the new Soviet High Dam project over the previous unamended Soviet project and over Western projects which had been put forward.

Persia In a PRAVDA article entitled "A throne based on terror" (3rd July) V. Vasil'yev said that, according to the Persian DAD, a new prison was to be built in Tehran at a cost of 93 m. rials. This, he observed, was not surprising, since "where American military bases are built new prisons are bound to be built too". He went on to draw a picture of "police terror" in Persia against students, workers on strike, peasants, etc.; so far from propping up the tottering Persian regime, he said, such measures only made its position more desperately insecure.

Israel Ben Gurion's victory in the Knesset debate on his arms deal with Western Germany (when a Communist motion of no confidence was rejected by 57 votes to five - all Communists - with 37 abstentions) was reported by PRAVDA (9th July) as follows:

> "On the motion of the parliamentary group of the Israeli Communist Party the Knesset debated a vote of no confidence in the Ben Gurion Government. Only the support of the extreme Right allowed Ben Gurion by an insignificant majority of votes to obtain the defeat of the vote of no confidence. Four Ministers in his Cabinet who belonged to the Mapam and Ahdut Avoda parties voted against the Government chiefs."

IZVESTIYA of 1st July published a fairly long account of the speech made in the debate by Shmuel Mikunis, on behalf of the Israeli Communist Party parliamentary group.

Issued by Central Asian Research Centre
in association with
St. Antony's College (Oxford) Soviet Affairs Study Group.